

WQOW-TV 18, Eau Claire, WI

LOCALISM INITIATIVES

To begin, this station is a sister station to WXOW 19 in La Crosse. Together, we hyper-serve our respective communities with a focus on local News, Weather, and Sports. Each station produces 17 hours of news each week, the vast majority of which is local to each of our respective communities. It is this commitment to both communities individually that highlights the enormous commitment to localism from WXOW 19 La Crosse and WQOW 18 Eau Claire.

Local News

Provide details on your station's investment in local news.

It is difficult to estimate how much is spent on producing 17 hours of news each and every week, especially when to be accurate, you'd have to consider the expense involved for both WXOW and WQOW collectively. It is fair to say that one third of our operating expenses are spent producing and delivering local News, Weather and Sports to our communities.

- **How many local newscasts are aired per week?** WQOW airs a 90 minute newscast on a Monday – Friday basis at 530am, a 30 minute cast on a Monday – Friday basis at 5pm, a 30 minute cast on a Monday – Saturday basis at 6pm and a 35 minute cast on a Monday – Sunday basis at 10pm. In addition, WQOW airs a five minute newscast each weekday morning at 725 and 825am, as well as two minute cut-ins at 758 and 858am. Also, four local weather reports are aired between 7 and 9am each weekday morning and two weather reports air between 7 and 8am each Saturday and Sunday mornings. All total, WQOW airs 23 separate full newscasts along with several shorter cut-ins and reports.
- **What percentage of your daily programming is devoted to local news?** 15% of the daily programming on WQOW is devoted to local news.
- **Has your station added newscasts in the morning or at other times?** WQOW's commitment to local news programming has continued to grow over time. Just over 8 years ago, WQOW began airing news again following an ownership change. WQOW aired just a weekday 6pm newscast and a daily 10pm newscast. Since that time, we have added a weekday 5pm news, a weekday morning news and a Saturday 6pm news. The morning newscast is 90 minutes of predominantly local news and weather.
- **Give examples of how your website is used to enhance local news coverage.** On a daily basis, WQOW updates our website with local news and sports stories. In addition, we provide comprehensive weather information, including updated daily forecasts several times per day, a seven day forecast, local radar, current temps around the region, almanac information and current conditions. WQOW also provides a free Internet weather service that allows the user to identify weather for very specific locations, such as their home, school or place of work. Our website also includes information about community events, such as fund raisers for local non

profit organizations. Also, we have provided a great deal of election year information on our web site, including up to the minute election results on the night of the primary and general elections.

Local Public Affairs

- **Describe all daily or weekly programs devoted to local public affairs, local politics, community activities, and similar issues.** In each and every newscast that airs on WQOW, you will find information pertaining to local public affairs, community activities, and every two years, you will find local political information in every newscast.
- **Are there regularly scheduled segments on local public affairs included in your local newscasts?** WQOW provides public affairs segments as often as twice daily in each weekday morning newscast and other segments in our 5pm newscast. These segments run between two and four minutes in length and they allow local organizations an opportunity to tell our viewers about upcoming special events and/or projects that may be taking place in the area.

Creating or Selecting Programming

- **Describe your station's efforts and practices for determining the types of programming you air.** WQOW considers many sources when determining what type of programming is needed in our viewing area. Examples are: Our local United Way. The United Way conducts research within their service area that identifies the primary issues and concerns of people in this area. News stories are often generated from this research to let our viewers know what needs are in this community.

WQOW management staff is involved through volunteerism on boards and committees for several area non-profits.

WQOW is actively involved with the area Chamber of Commerce. This involvement allows staff to be connected to developments in and around our community for a wide array of issues.

WQOW actively seeks feedback from area citizens via both our website and on-air solicitation. The result of these efforts is regular mail and e-mail from viewers commenting on the job we do and services we provide.

- **Provide any examples when your station preempted network programming in order to air other programming of more interest to your local community.** We have preempted our network on numerous occasions over the years and of late to broadcast programs of special local interest. Examples would include local debates, including 3rd District Congressional races and US Senate; our annual Children's Miracle Network telethon; local sporting events such as Packers preseason football, a University of Wisconsin Eau Claire football game every fall and high school girls and boys' hockey and basketball games every March.

Emergency Programming

- **Describe any live and/or on-the-scene coverage of emergencies, weather, traffic, crime, and similar events, including any positive impact of your coverage on the local community.** WQOW's policy is to interrupt programming for weather emergencies immediately when that emergency occurs. We do not compromise when it comes to the safety of our area viewers.
- **Describe your station's investment in ENG or weather forecasting equipment.** WQOW recently put into service a new Live truck. The very day it was put into service, a plane crashed on a city street just minutes from the television station. WQOW went Live with reports from the scene, alerting area residents to downed power lines and blocked roads. As we move forward with this new newsgathering tool, we will continue to use it for local events, including high school sports, local election coverage as well as breaking news affecting this community.

WQOW employs the latest in weather forecasting equipment including local live radar and the ability to alert area residents of not only daily forecasts but impending severe weather via our Internet based service.

- **Does your station participate in AMBER or EAS (e.g., as a Local Primary or Monitoring Station)?** Yes, WQOW passes along all AMBER and EAS alerts as they occur.

Political Programming

- **Describe any candidate debates sponsored or aired. Include examples of candidates declining debate offers.** WQOW has aired many political debates over the years. This past year alone we have aired a 3rd District congressional debate. This debate aired three different times, giving our viewers multiple options to watch. This 3rd District debate has been an every election year event for us.

We aired two US Senate debates, one produced by our state broadcast association and one that we participated in the production of in our market. For the past 10 years or so, we have broadcasted a US Senate debate on an every-four-year basis.

We aired three presidential debates and one vice president debate.

- **Does your station offer candidates other types of free air time?** WQOW offers free time to candidates. First, any debate we do is free, and each debate airs for one hour. Secondly, we have provided a two minute slot in Good Morning America each Saturday and Sunday starting two weeks before the primary and running each weekend up to the general election. These time periods were offered free to the candidates to provide our viewers with some political dialogue and our local candidates used the time slot to tell viewers about themselves and why they would be a good choice for the office they were pursuing. Finally, we aired candidate profiles and covered many candidate stories from the primary up to the general election in

our daily local newscasts. In total, we made the commitment, and have lived up to that commitment, to air 30 minutes of free candidate and political information each week from the primary to the general election.

- **Describe your station's efforts to analyze important political/ballot issues or candidates. Are local political issues discussed, or candidates interviewed, during newscasts or public affairs programming on a regular basis?**
WQOW covers every important local ballot issues that arises. We do this in news reports as well as providing free air-time to discuss these issues in more detail on our morning news program. Candidates are interviewed regularly in all our newscasts and are given free air-time to discuss what they choose in our weekend morning news. These segments have been devoted throughout this political campaign to giving local candidates an opportunity to reach the public free of charge.
- **Does the station cover local campaign and/or convention events?**
WQOW covers all the local campaigns through news stories on candidates and by providing the free air-time to candidates to discuss whatever they choose...airing during our weekend morning newscasts.
- **Describe the station's participation in promoting voter registration drives.**
WQOW has produced a PSA encouraging people to not only get registered but to get out and vote on Election Day. In addition, WQOW news has done stories on how to find your local precinct in which to vote, what kind of identification you will need to vote and whether or not you can register at the polls. In addition, WQOW has produced stories on absentee balloting.
- **Give examples of how your website is used to enhance political coverage.**
WQOW's website is extensive and informative. We not only provide information about the candidates and their positions, but on election night we will provide extensive and up to the minute coverage of all the local races as well as the Presidential race. WQOW also uses our website as an election educational tool, providing information about the Electoral College,

Civic, Cultural and Other Community-Responsive Programming

- **Describe all programming targeted at particular segments of the community, including the number of hours weekly, and the nature of the programming.** In addition to the local religious programming we carry for two and a half hours each Sunday morning, WQOW produces and airs a local weekly outdoors show called Northland Adventures. This program airs every Sunday night at 1035pm and covers outdoors activities from hunting and fishing to bird watching and hiking. It is a highly praised and award winning show, and one we are very proud to carry on our station.
- **Describe any coverage of local events, such as local sports, museum openings, fairs, holiday events, local theater, fire or police outreach events. Give examples.**

WQOW prides itself on covering as many local sporting events on a daily/weekly basis as possible. We are diligent about having all the available scores on our website. And each March, we preempt network programming to carry live, the state championship Boys and Girls Basketball games in all divisions and hockey championships too.

WQOW has been instrumental in the fundraising efforts to open a new Children's Museum. The Museum is scheduled to open December 2004. We have staff on the fundraising committee as well as having produced 3 PSA's asking for donations and/or volunteers.

WQOW also is a partner with the local Symphony, promoting each and every performance.

We promote every performance of the local theater and Children's theater both with PSA's and with our regularly scheduled Arts and Entertainment list of things happening in the community.

On an annual basis, WQOW promotes literally hundreds of local activities through the use of its airtime.

- **Describe any PSAs local groups or addressing local issues. Give examples of any particularly successful campaigns.** The Children's Museum is the most recent example of a particularly successful campaign amid difficult economic times. The museum is now set to open in December 2004 after successfully raising over \$3 million dollars in gifts and services. As well as staff being involved in direct fundraising efforts, WQOW has run a PSA campaign asking for donations and volunteers.
- **Describe your station's coverage of important issues affecting the local community, such as consumer rip-offs, smoking and other health hazards, safety, drinking & driving, domestic abuse, and similar issues.** Within the past year, three separate companies closed their doors affecting 600 jobs in the community. When community leaders came to the table to discuss what could be done, WQOW was the local television station asked to help. At a local job fair, WQOW provided an opportunity for job seekers to stand in front of a camera and videotape their skills. A video resume is what we called it. WQOW then took those video resumes and aired them, 3-4 daily in our morning newscasts for two months. Job seekers gave out a reference number at the end of their resume in order for prospective business people to locate them at the workforce development office. We taped 61 video resumes in a little over two hours that day. Many were called for interviews but we were unable to track whether or not any were hired.

Music

- **Does your station provide on-air opportunities for local artists, either periodically or on a regular basis? Are local artists promoted, interviewed?**
WQOW airs a weekly updated listing of area events and attractions. It airs during our newscasts on Thursday, Friday and Saturday as well as being produced in a 30 second format for air during the daily schedule.

WQOW on occasion showcases local musicians, live during our morning news program. This happens sporadically but has been done on a couple of occasions.

WQOW also supports the local Symphony through a partnership. When a performance is coming up, the conductor or Executive Director, or on occasion a musician, comes to the studio to promote the event.

WQOW also promotes the local theater in the same way...Not only in Eau Claire but in surrounding communities.

Area art shows and artists are also handled and promoted in this fashion.

WQOW has committed to sponsoring a new initiative called the Garage Band Contest. The program is being created by the Wisconsin Music Teachers Association, and there will be six regional contests conducted around the state this coming spring. WQOW will be sponsoring the Eau Claire regional. We will be promoting the event and covering it as well. Six area bands and or musicians will compete to be the top "Garage Band" from this area. The regional winner will advance to the state competition. In order to compete, one member of the performing group must participate in a high school music program of some kind.

Station Participation in Community Activities

- **Give examples of your station's support of non-profit and charity initiatives, such as telethons and other efforts on behalf of the March of Dimes, United Way, Make-A-Wish, etc. Are station executives on the boards of such groups?**

We are extensively involved in promoting all manor of projects in this community. Here is a very brief list:

WQOW helped promote and continues to promote the start up of a Children's Museum here in Eau Claire.

WQOW supports the United Way:

- Through individual donations
- Through corporate donations in each station's community
- Through volunteering on the United Way Board.
- Through stories following the launch and progress of the campaign.

WQOW runs a weekly feature within our Newscast seeking volunteers to be Big Brothers and Big Sisters, called Tuesday's Child.

Each month WQOW recognizes outstanding local teachers in a feature called The Golden Apple.

We have heavily promoted fundraising activities of the local Special Olympics. Our staff volunteer in the schools...some speaking to kids about opportunities, others reading to school children.

WQOW is a supporter financially and organizer of an area Chamber initiative for local high school students called Youth Leadership.

- **Provide examples of how your station promotes causes not tied to a particular organization, such as health screenings, free vaccinations, nutritional advice, community fundraisers, blood drives, disaster relief efforts, etc.**
WQOW has covered and continues to follow the flu shot shortage, consistently alerting area residents as to where the next flu-shot clinic will be held. Each week we report on the time and location of clinics as well as when some of these clinics run out of vaccine.
- **Give examples of station involvement in education initiatives, such as partnering with schools to promote their needs for school supplies, or promoting immunizations or after school programs.** WQOW News covers these stories as they emerge. Each year we cover the need for school supplies and do stories as needed on immunizations, school lunch programs, the introduction and education of a growing population of Hmong immigrants, and any other issue that arises.
- **Does your station cover school board or PTA meetings, or important education-related issues?** We cover these issues within our newscasts. Examples would be the recent acknowledgement that the Eau Claire School Board missed a \$3 million dollar addition to the expense budget to take effect this year. This is a hotly debated issue within the community. WQOW covers this story and others as they develop.

WQOW also recognizes teachers each and every month with its Golden Apple Award. Given out to outstanding educators who positively affect the daily lives of our children.

At WQOW-TV, we are proud of our community service and the vital role we play in informing and educating our viewing audience.